

Let me say this about that

—By Gene Klare



## Fame for Diamond

**NORM DIAMOND**, 63, of Portland, enters the Labor Hall of Fame this week with the hall's door being opened by the sponsoring Northwest Oregon Labor Retirees Council, an affiliate of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Diamond's career includes making steel at age 17 in a South Chicago mill; earning higher education degrees at the University of Chicago and Harvard; teaching at Princeton, Antioch and a labor college in Portland; educating workers in Ohio, Oregon and elsewhere; consulting on workers' compensation with the Hungarian government; conducting labor programs on KBOO radio in Portland, and being a labor playwright and historian.



**NORM DIAMOND**

him learn the skills he needed for the hazardous job. He left the mill after a crane accident killed his work partner. He decided to resume his education and entered the University of Chicago, which accepted him without a high school diploma. He paid his college expenses and supported himself by doing household chores for several families. While at the University of Chicago, Diamond played shortstop and second base on the University's baseball team, of which he was captain. He led the team in home runs and stolen bases. He turned down signing bonus offers from the major league Chicago White Sox and the then-Milwaukee Braves because he had a chance to continue his education at Harvard. After receiving a bachelor's degree in political science at Chicago, he traveled to Germany and was a guest worker with a group of Sicilians at a lumber mill in Stuttgart. This job gave him an opportunity to save money for attending Harvard.

**DIAMOND'S NEXT MOVE** was to return to the United States and pursue a doctorate in political science at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Next, he obtained a job teaching political science at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He was on the Antioch faculty from 1969 to 1979. While at Antioch, he was given a leave to teach at Princeton University in New Jersey.

Diamond said one of the attractions for him at Antioch was its policy of having students intersperse their studies with periods of work. Diamond arranged for his students to work for labor unions in Ohio and nationally. He also conducted worker education classes at Antioch for members of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE). He helped the American Federation of Teachers organize Antioch faculty members and assisted another union, an electrical industry union known as the UE, in organizing non-teaching workers at the college. The state of Ohio honored Diamond by naming him the State Humanist.

**HIS MOVE** to Portland came about because an Antioch student from Oregon told him that the Pacific Northwest Labor College was looking for teachers. PNLC had been started in 1977 by the Portland-headquartered International (Turn to Page 11)

# Auto Workers end two-day walk-out at General Motors

DETROIT — Some 73,000 active members of the United Auto Workers Union at 80 General Motors plants nationwide will vote on a new four-year contract offer this month, ending a two-day strike.

UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and union officials from across the U.S. are recommending ratification of the pact. If approved, it would then set a pattern with the other two of Detroit's "Big Three" automakers — Ford and Chrysler.

Auto workers walked off the job Sept. 24 after negotiations broke down over job security issues. The old contract expired Sept. 14.

The last strike in the auto industry was in 1970, when the UAW won a 67-day strike at GM.

Local union leaders are meeting with members to discuss terms of the agreement. Voting should be wrapped up by Oct. 10.

Gettelfinger declined to release details of the proposed four-year pact, but news reports said it included a \$3,000-per-member signing bonus, a freeze in base wages all four years — but with bonuses every year — elimination of cost-of-living increases, and a two-tier wage system where new hires would earn just over half of what present workers get for the same jobs.

Associated Press reported that under the new agreement, hourly workers will get economic gains totaling \$13,056 over the life of the four-year contract, based on a 2,080-hour year and 10 percent overtime. That includes a \$3,000 bonus in the first year followed by a 3 percent bonus in the second year, 4 percent in the third and 3 percent in the fourth. An assembly worker's hourly rate will rise to \$28.85 at the end of the fourth year from \$28.12.

AP also reported that some 3,000 temporary workers would get permanent jobs at the full-time wage rate and that GM agreed to a moratorium on outsourcing.

And some workers will be earning less than before. New hires who aren't doing direct manufacturing jobs, such as groundskeepers, will make between \$14 and \$16 an hour. There are 16,000 people doing non-core work in U.S. plants.

The tentative agreement also creates a Voluntary Employees Beneficiary Association (VEBA) trust. GM sought to create the retiree-health trust to take about \$50 billion of future obligations off its books.

GM has around 340,000 retirees and spouses.

GM reportedly will put \$24.1 billion into the VEBA in January 2008, although the fund won't start covering retiree health care until 2010. GM will make up to 20 additional \$165 million payments to the VEBA anytime the fund's level is insufficient to provide benefits for at least 25 years.

GM's active workers also will be required to contribute 4 cents per quarter

for the VEBA.

"I think our retirees will be exceptionally pleased with this contract," Gettelfinger said. "For active members, there will be some changes. I think overall they will be very, very pleased with the outcome of these negotiations and the job security associated with it."

Only active members vote on ratification of the contract.

In return, GM promises to invest more money in plants in the U.S., not overseas, and to promote job security for the remaining UAW members. Tens of thousands of workers have taken buy-outs over the last year, after bargaining over buyout details by GM and UAW.

But not everyone is happy with the deal.

Former UAW Vice Presidents/board members Paul Schrade, Warren Davis and Jerry Tucker, who previously sent an open letter to Gettelfinger against the VEBA, also urged a vote against the contract.

"We regret the decision by the UAW negotiators to tentatively agree to place

future health care protection of hundreds of thousands of UAW retired members under a union-run VEBA. We believe it irresponsible ... to shift the burden of risk to the retired workers and their families and release General Motors from its commitment to the full and perpetual coverage of health care for the workers who built the wealth of the corporation in the first place," the three wrote.

"Springing a new and potentially hazardous economic concept on an unsuspecting membership, either active or retired, is alien to the democratic principles in our governing constitution. That a VEBA can be dangerous is well documented. UAW retired members covered by a VEBA at Caterpillar can painfully vouch for that. Their VEBA went bust and they now have thousands of dollars in unanticipated out-of-pocket costs per year for reduced health care protection," the three warned.

*(This article was compiled from Web sites and newspaper reports, including Press Associates Inc.)*



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